

until we reached those uncultivated portions of Assam, that are so frequent in the immediate vicinity of the Brahmaputra.

Our marches to Rangamutty were as follow :—

From Koolta to Bullumpore.

From Bullumpore to Kuldhooba.

From Kuldhooba to Burrumdungur.

From Burrumdungur to Rangamutty.

At Rangamutty, where we received every civility from the Bhoo-rawur, we took boat and arrived at Goalpara on the

Beyond this it is scarcely necessary to trace our progress. I have only to add, that but one death occurred during the time the Mission was absent.

(*To be continued.*)

ART. VI.—*Report on the Museum of the Asiatic Society.*

By Dr. WM. JAMESON.

[The subjoined very important Report on the state of our Museum, forms a part of the Proceedings of April, but we deem it well deserving of the earliest publicity. During the few weeks Dr. Jameson held the office of Curator, his exertions have accomplished more than could be readily believed, in reducing the chaotic materials of the Museum into systematic arrangement and disposition. His suggestions will doubtless receive the attentive consideration they are so strongly entitled to, and we trust before long that our Museum will be guaranteed from such reproaches as Mr. Jameson now too justly inflicts on it. His accomplished successor, Dr. M'Clelland, has all the skill and zeal essential for success, but the means at his disposal are manifestly too limited to enable him to execute all the measures his judgment would dictate. We anxiously hope that the naturalists of the Society will be excited by Dr. Jameson's Report to consider of the best and readiest means for the establishment of a Museum befitting the first Scientific Institution in the East. As our funds have been heavily drawn on this season for the erection of a new suite of apartments, to accommodate our growing collections, we think it would be worthy of those who feel the importance of such ennobling pursuits, to come forward with the means for furnishing our Museum with every essential appurtenance of the best and most

durable kind. We shall be happy to act as Trustees for a 'Museum Fund,' should our suggestions meet the approbation of those who understand and appreciate the object in view.—EDS.]

In reporting upon the present state of the collection of the Asiatic Society, we have felt much disinclination, fearing lest by so doing we might be considered as attacking the proceedings of our predecessors; we however consider it our duty, from the place we now hold, and the more so as we leave this in a few days for the Upper Provinces, trusting that when the statement has been laid before the Society, active measures will be taken to improve its condition.

We shall first notice the *Minerals* and *Rocks*. In these two departments the collection is exceedingly rich as far as numbers are concerned. Of the former there are upwards of two thousand specimens, and of the latter probably upwards of four thousand; but the miserable condition in which they have been kept—packed in drawers one above another, without paper, or any other material intervening—has rendered many of them entirely useless and unfit to be placed in the collection. In particular we would mention the *Zeolites*, many of which originally must have been magnificent. The *Apophyllites* (a species of zeolite) are very fine, and still valuable specimens, and had they not been so much destroyed, the Society might have claimed the merit of possessing, of this particular variety, the finest specimen, probably, in the world. Most of the other specimens have been equally neglected, and many of value destroyed. In regard to labels, there were but few attached, and of these many wrong. The *Rocks*, of which there is a most magnificent and extensive collection, would have been doubly valuable if they had been furnished with labels, indicating the locality from whence they had been obtained; at present after a collection containing every variety has been laid aside for the Society's own Museum, the others, when named, will form valuable duplicates for exchanging. To this department of the Society's Museum no attention whatever has been paid, although probably the most important. Lying beneath one of the tables in the Museum there was a large collection, said to be sent by Dr. Helfer, but as not one of the specimens was labelled, that is intimating where found, we have not been able to make use of them. In fact such a collection is quite useless to a Society; and even if some important mineral should be found in it, the value of the discovery could not be followed up. It would be of importance to intimate this to individuals engaged in making such collections.

Mammalia.—The collection of quadrupeds consists of about seventy specimens, many of which are exceedingly good, and a few very rare, among which we would characterise the *Hylobates albimanus*, *Hylobates hoolock*, *Ailurus refugens*, *Ictides albifrons*; but in this department the collection of the Society is very deficient, not containing above a fifth of the quadrupeds found in India. Moreover many specimens, from their bad condition, would require to be replaced as soon as possible.

Birds.—The number of birds prepared amount to upwards of six hundred specimens, and in addition to these there is a considerable collection in boxes, many specimens of which are not as yet in the Museum. Among the birds, there are some exceedingly rare and valuable specimens, and several new to science, which we shall now notice briefly. 1. *Larus kroicocephalus*. The discovery of this species is probably one of the most interesting which has been made in ornithology for some time. In size it is equal to the *Larus marinus* of Europe, and possesses in the head and neck colours

one of the principal characters essential to the genus *Kroicocephalus* of Eton, in every other character it is a true *Larus*; and as the colour of the head and neck disappear in winter, we have therefore this species representing in summer the genus *Kroicocephalus*, and in winter *Larus*; shewing the necessity of abandoning the former genus. The specimen in the Society's collection is partly in a state of change from the summer to the winter. In the Edinburgh Royal Museum there is another specimen in perfect summer plumage: these probably are the only two specimens known. The name we have adopted is one which we proposed to the Wernerian Society, being the generic one of Eton reduced to trivial value. Belonging to that interesting genus the *Leiothrix*, Swains. of which there is but one species described, there are two new species in the collection of the Society, in the Edinburgh Museum there is a third, and in the Zoological Society's Museum of London a fourth, all of which are peculiar to India, and thus the number of species is now increased to five, shewing the necessity and importance of making new genera, if the characters presented are sufficiently marked, although at first only one species should be presented. We could enumerate a large series of genera which were represented a few years ago by one species only, but which now contain from three to twelve species. In a bird lately laid before the Society by Dr. Evans, and considered by him as a variety of the *Aquila Chryractus*, the Society has a new species belonging to the genera *Haliaëtus*; the only other specimen we have seen is in the collection of the Zoological Society of London. We cannot omit mentioning the *Eurylaimus Dalhousiæ* as exceedingly rare and valuable species, three specimens only being known to exist in collections. Many other novelties, some of them extremely interesting in illustrating ornithological geography could be pointed out, which however would extend our report to an undue length; we however may state that Dr. Helfer has sent lately to the Society a new *Chalcites*, and *Irena puella*, and *Calyptomina viridis*, both of which were supposed to be confined to the Asiatic Islands.

Osteology.—The Osteological Department of the Society's collection is small, but still there are several splendid skeletons. The magnificence of the Fossil Osteological collection cannot be too strongly pointed out; but it is much and deeply to be regretted that there is no proper accommodation for it; which we hope will soon be remedied by proper cases being provided, and placed in the new apartments now building, in order that the many unique and valuable specimens may be properly exposed to view.

In regard to the *Ichthyological*, *Erpetological*, *Conchological*, &c. departments of the Society we have not had any leisure to examine, and therefore forbear at present giving any report. But as there is much room for improvement in the departments we have already noticed, we beg to offer a few suggestions.

Minerals and Rocks.—Before the collections of Minerals and Rocks can be generally useful, there must be proper means for exhibitions, and we hope soon to see cases fitted up on the plan we proposed, or any other which may be suggested, furnished to the rooms. The advantages in having collections of Rocks and Minerals arranged and labelled properly, would no doubt be of the greatest consequence, seeing that it would form the basis for comparison of any collections which may hereafter reach the Museum; and also be of use to individuals for comparing their own private collections. As far as it lay in our power, during the short space of time we have had, we have arranged the Minerals in the tables formerly occupied by eggs, birds' heads, &c. only temporary however, expecting that more suitable cases will be provided. The Rocks are still lying

exposed for want of accommodation, but a few of them so arranged that when cases are provided, they can be removed by any individual.* The system we have followed is that of Werner, as improved by modern authors. If any member would now visit and see the extent of their Mineralogical collection, I am sure they would be convinced of the necessity of having proper cases.

The Bird cases since last Meeting have been fitted up with shelving, which has enabled us to arrange systematically the collection, and the system we have adopted is that of the Baron Cuvier. Moreover, in addition to the advantage derived in having a systematic arrangement, the cases will now contain three times as many specimens as they did formerly. To us it appears a most extraordinary idea, to suppose that objects of Natural History cannot be properly preserved in this country. No doubt in cases fitted up in the same manner as those of the Society at the present moment, they could not, either here or any where else; but if these cases were made air-tight, by lining the edges of the doors with chamois leather poisoned with arsenic, according to the plan adopted with the cases of many of the European collections, we would be bound to say, that the collections could be preserved nearly as well here as in Europe. At least this is a subject well worthy the attention of the Society.

In conclusion, we shall offer a few brief remarks in regard to the desiderata. To increase their collections, public bodies have generally adopted one plan, viz.—a memorial giving a brief account of the manner how to prepare, collect, and pack objects of Natural History, and at the same time pointing out those objects most to be desired. If such a memorial was got up under the auspices of this Society, and distributed among its numerous members and correspondents throughout India, the Society would not only possess for itself a collection in a very short time, but at the same time would have at its disposal, for making exchanges, a large series of duplicates; and in the space of a few years by so doing with the different collections in Europe, America, Cape, and Sydney, it would thus bring together, with little expense to itself, a collection which would vie with the various noble institutions on the European continent, and at the same time worthy of this the so-called City of Palaces. Before this can be done, a Catalogue of the collection must be made. Moreover the Society could in a series of tables exhibit by specimens, that is by bringing together the rocks of the different districts bordering on each other, the Geology of the whole of India, and thus in a manner supply that great desideratum, at least to individuals here, viz. the want of a Geological Map, and probably it might be the means of leading to this desirable object; an undertaking worthy of support from such an institution, and from the country at large.

W. J.

* Dr. McClelland informs us they have been once more swept into chaos by the unguarded hands of *assistants* since Mr. Jameson's departure. Nothing can more clearly prove the futility of attempting to do any thing in this department before proper cabinets are procured.—EDS.